

From Governor Barbour:

Marsha and I welcome all of you to Mississippi on the occasion of the 2008 Goshawk Ball and regret we can't be there in person. We especially want to thank Captain John Wood, commanding officer of Training Air Wing One at Naval Air Station Meridian for his kind invitation to this special event that is being held in Mississippi for the first time. As Governor and as a big fan of Naval aviation and what it means to Mississippi, just let me say ... "don't wait seven years to come back!"

Seriously, to all of the senior officers there tonight, to all of the pilots and other personnel you represent who are on duty around the globe, to all of our contractors who build such fantastic equipment, and to the entire Naval aviation family, I want to say we respect, admire and appreciate what you do. We are a safer nation because of what you do.

I'm a little partial because Naval Air Station Meridian does at least half of all Naval jet training but am grateful for what's done in Texas and Florida, and, across the country - the Pentagon, too. The way I look at it, the cause of national defense is an American cause and it is so comforting to know we are up to the challenge.

I hope y'all have some fun tonight as you pay tribute to these tremendous contributions by the men and women who design, build, fly and maintain the T45 Goshawk. And, as I'm sure Lamar McDonald has already told you, those slot machines out there are just for decoration!

Again, welcome. We're delighted you're here.